

# MICHIGAN STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY

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October 8, 2013

TO: The House Regulatory Reform Committee;  
Representative Crawford, Chairman

FROM: Kay Watnick, MD on behalf of the Michigan State Medical Society

RE: Support and Testimony for House Bills 4404 and 4405.

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Thank you Mister Chairman, and distinguished members of the Committee on Regulatory Reform, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of legislation to prohibit minors from using indoor tanning beds. My name is Dr. Kay Watnick and I am a Board Certified Dermatologist from West Bloomfield, and a recent past president of the Michigan Dermatological Society.

I have been practicing Dermatology in Michigan for 29 years, and during that time there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, most prominently in young women.

Melanoma, which can be fatal, is now the most common cause of cancer in young adults aged 25-29, and the second most common cause of cancer in those aged 15-29, and this is predominantly in young women.

Why?

During the past 30 years, indoor tanning bed use has increased dramatically, especially in fair-skinned, young females. We know that 70% of tanning bed users are female between the ages of 16-29, the exact group that has seen the alarming increase in the incidence of melanoma and other skin cancers as well.

In the past several years, large studies from Minnesota, Australia, and Scandinavia, have shown a direct and unequivocal correlation between tanning bed use and skin cancer, with all other variables, including outdoor sun exposure, being accounted for.

The risk of melanoma increased by as much as 85% when tanning bed use began before age 30. The risk increases the earlier the age of use begins, and the more frequent the



use. The younger the skin, the more damage is inflicted by UV radiation. Fully 76% of melanomas in those aged 18-29 are attributable to tanning bed use.

The ultraviolet radiation emitted from tanning bed bulbs is much more potent than outdoor sunshine, in one report being 15 times stronger.

The World Health Organization and The National Institutes of Health (NIH), have declared indoor tanning beds carcinogenic to humans, in the same category as cigarette smoke and asbestos. They recommend against their use. The evidence is now so overwhelming that many countries including France, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Australia, Brazil and several areas in Canada have banned tanning bed use for minors under age 18.

In this country, in the past 12 months, 6 states have passed legislation to prohibit minors under age 18 from tanning bed use, including Illinois, Nevada, Vermont, California, Oregon, and Texas. This legislation is supported by the AMA, The Michigan State Medical Society, The Michigan Dermatological Society, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Dermatology, and virtually every other medical association in this country.

Studies show that parental consent laws are not enforced well nationwide. In addition, tanning bed operators are frequently teenagers themselves, with minimal knowledge of the dangers of UV radiation to skin.

When I first started practicing Dermatology, seeing a melanoma in a young person was rare. Now it is happening too frequently, particularly in young women. The phone calls I make to them when the biopsy report returns, are tough. These are otherwise healthy young women who could potentially die of an often preventable disease.

Passing this legislation will save money in our overburdened health care system, as advanced melanoma is extremely expensive to treat. But mostly, passing this legislation will save lives. This is an epidemic that we can reverse, with the passing of this legislation.